

Serial No. 09/421,635
Amendment A

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-10.

Please consider the following set of pending claims 11-45, of which claims 11-14 and 16 have been amended, and claims 17-45 are new, as attached in clean form as well as in marked-up form showing changes in the amended claims relative to the previous version of the claims according to 37 C.F.R. §1.121(c)(3):

Clean Version of Pending Claims 11-45

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11. (Once amended) A tool comprising
a first functional instrument including a first handle, and
a second functional instrument including a second handle,
the first functional instrument engaging the second functional instrument to form a
composite instrument, and

the first handle mating with the second handle when the first functional instrument is
engaged with the second instrument forming a composite handle,

at least one of the first handle and second handle being comprised of material that
indicates whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument
has been heat sterilized.

12. (Once amended) A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication whether at
least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument has been heat
sterilized comprises a deformation of at least a portion of the material.

13. (Once amended) A tool according to claim 12, wherein the deformation prevents
the first handle from mating with the second handle.

14. (Once amended) A tool comprising
a first functional instrument including a first handle, and
a second functional instrument including a second handle,
the first functional instrument engaging the second functional instrument to form a
composite instrument, and

the first handle mating with the second handle when the first functional instrument is
engaged with the second instrument forming a composite handle,

at least one of the first handle and second handle being comprised of material that
indicates whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument
has been sterilized by least one of radiation and sterilization chemicals.

15. A tool according to claim 14, wherein the material changes colors when exposed to at least one of radiation and sterilization chemicals.

16. (Once amended). A method of accessing bone which utilizes the tool of claim 11.

17. (New) A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication comprises a color change in at least a portion of the material.

18. (New) A tool according to claim 12, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the material, the first handle does not completely engage the second handle to form the composite handle.

19. (New) A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication comprises a change in the physical composition of the material.

20. (New) A tool according to claim 12, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the material, the first functional instrument does not completely engage the second functional instrument to form the composite instrument.

21. (New) A tool according to claim 14, wherein the indication comprises a change in the physical composition of the material.

22. (New) A tool comprising
a first instrument including a first handle, and
a second instrument including a second handle,
the first handle mating with the second handle to form a composite handle, and
at least one of the first handle and second handle comprising material that indicates
whether at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized.

23. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using heat.

24. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using steam.

25. (New) The tool of Claim 23, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized in an autoclave.

26. (New) The tool of Claim 23, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using superheated steam.

27. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using a gas.

28. (New) The tool of Claim 27, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using a vaporized liquid.

29. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using radiation.

30. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using chemicals.

31. (New) The tool of Claim 30, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second instruments has been sterilized using ethylene-oxide.

32. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the material changes color in response to sterilization.

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33. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the material deforms in response to sterilization.

34. (New) A tool according to claim 33, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the material, the first handle does not completely engage the second handle to form the composite handle.

35. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the first or second instrument deforms in response to sterilization.

36. (New) A tool according to claim 35, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the first or second instrument, the first instrument does not completely engage the second instrument to form the composite instrument.

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37. (New) A tool according to claim 35, wherein, subsequent to the deformation of at least a portion of the first or second instrument, the first handle does not completely engage the second handle to form the composite handle.

38. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein at least a portion of the material changes physical composition in response to sterilization.

39. (New) The tool of Claim 32, wherein at least a portion of the material changes color during the sterilization process.

40. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material comprises a chemically sensitive pigment.

41. (New) The tool of Claim 22, wherein the material comprises Lustran™ material.

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42. (New) The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using a gas.

43. (New) The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using a vaporized liquid.

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44. (New) The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using ethylene-oxide.

45. (New) The tool of Claim 14, wherein the material indicates that at least one of the first or second functional instruments has been sterilized using a radiation source.

Marked-Up Version of Amended Claims 11-14 and 16

11. (Once amended) A tool [according to claim 1,] comprising
a first functional instrument including a first handle, and
a second functional instrument including a second handle,
the first functional instrument engaging the second functional instrument to form a
composite instrument, and

the first handle mating with the second handle when the first functional instrument is
engaged with the second instrument forming a composite handle,

[wherein] at least one of the first handle and second handle [is composed] being
comprised of material that indicates whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the
second functional instrument has been heat sterilized.

12. (Once amended) A tool according to claim 11, wherein the indication whether at
least one of the first functional instrument and the second functional instrument has been heat
sterilized comprises a deformation of at least a portion of the material [degrades when exposed to
heat].

13. (Once amended) A tool according to claim 12, wherein the deformation prevents
the first handle from [coupling] mating with the second handle.

14. (Once amended) A tool [according to claim 1,] comprising
a first functional instrument including a first handle, and
a second functional instrument including a second handle,
the first functional instrument engaging the second functional instrument to form a
composite instrument, and

the first handle mating with the second handle when the first functional instrument is
engaged with the second instrument forming a composite handle,

[wherein] at least one of the first handle and second handle [is composed] being
comprised of material that indicates whether at least one of the first functional instrument and the

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second functional instrument has been sterilized by least one of radiation and sterilization chemicals.

16. (Once amended). A method of accessing bone which utilizes the tool of claim 11.